

Daikon Radish - Learn About Daikon Radish

(pronounced DI-kuhn; DI-cone)

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Picture courtesy of [Evergreen Y.H. Enterprises](#) - sellers of oriental vegetable seeds (to order seeds, click on their name)

Description - The word Daikon actually comes from two Japanese words: dai (meaning large) and kon (meaning root). Daikon is is root vegetable said to have originated in the Mediterranean and brought to China for cultivation around 500 B.C. Roots are large, often 2 to 4 inches in diameter and 6 to 20 inches long. There are three distinct shapes - spherical, oblong and cylindrical.

Radishes have been developed in the Orient which develop very large roots, reportedly up to 40 or 50 pounds, and with leaf top spreads of more than 2 feet (they require a long growing season for such development. These types are grown in the U.S., mainly by Asians for use in oriental dishes). Most of the commonly available Chinese radishes are white, but some are yellowish, green or black.



More daikon is produced in Japan than any other vegetable. Many different varieties of this versatile vegetable are cultivated, depending on the region.

These radishes are generally marketed in bunches of three or four roots for the small variety and one to three roots for the larger variety, depending on size.

Other Names - Lo pue (Hmong); daikon (Japanese); lor bark (Cantonese Chinese); labanos (Filipino); cu-cai trang (Vietnamese). Also known as an oriental radish, Chinese radish, and icicle radish.

Culture - Culture is similar to the common radish, except that daikons are bigger and need more space and a longer growing season. A deep, loose, moist, fertile soil is required. Plant in late winter or early spring for spring and summer use and in July for fall harvest.

Availability - Chinese radishes are grown commercially in Texas, primarily near Houston in south Texas. Major production is in California. They can be found on the market 12 months out of the year, especially in areas having an Oriental population.

Selection - As with any root crop, look for Chinese radishes that are free of growth cracks and bruises with firm and crisp roots. Chinese radishes keep well in refrigeration if they are placed in a sealed container or plastic bag to maintain high humidity.

Storage - Chinese radishes will keep well in the refrigerator if they are placed in a sealed container or plastic bag in order to maintain high humidity.

Preparation - This is an extremely versatile vegetable that can be eaten raw in salads or cut into strips or chips for relish trays. It also can be stir-fried, grilled, baked, boiled or broiled. Use the daikon as you would a radish. It may be served raw in salads or grated for use as a condiment (if you don't have a Japanese-style grater, use a cheese grater and grate just before serving), pickled, or simmered in a soup. They are also preserved by salting as in making sauerkraut. Daikon also is used in soups and simmered dishes. To prepare, peel skin as you would a carrot and cut for whatever style your recipe idea calls for. Not only is the root eaten, but the leaves also are rich in vitamin C, beta carotene, calcium, and iron, so they are worth using instead of discarding.

A Japanese secret to cooking daikon is to use water in which rice has been washed or a bit of rice bran added (this keeps the daikon white and eliminates bitterness and sharpness}.

For Chips, Relish Tray Sticks or Stir Fries - Simply peel Daikon with a peeler and cut crossways for thin chips. Dip thin chips in ice water and they will crisp and curl for a Daikon chip platter with your favorite sour cream or yogurt dip. Cut into julienne strips for relish trays, salads or stir-frys.

Nutrition Information - Daikon is very low in calories. A 3 ounce serving contains only 18 calories and provides 34 percent of the RDA for vitamin C. Rich in vitamin C, daikon contains active enzymes that aid digestion, particularly of starchy foods. Select those that feel heavy and have lustrous skin and fresh leaves.

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